

From: ["Brooks, Karl" </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP \(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT\)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=78AC91F4DB6D44F58424B504D5AA3C7D-BROOKS, KARL>](#)
To: [Whitley](#)
[Christopher](#);
CC:
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Subject:

Worries, impatience, and questions surround the West Lake Landfill Superfund Site in Bridgeton, Mo. Good people want assurance and action. They expect answers from EPA.

While EPA cannot promise swift action, this fact remains true:

Scientific evidence shows no one living or working around West Lake is experiencing harmful exposures to its hazardous contaminants, including the radiologically-contaminated materials, because EPA has securely contained them.

EPA, working with our federal, state and local partners, has ordered the responsible parties to fund and maintain controls to keep those contaminants from threatening people's health.

This Superfund site's history certainly fuels frustrations with a legal process that, from outside the fence looking in, seems to move too slowly. This agency strives to meet impatience with clear, accurate facts about the site, its conditions, and EPA's duty to select a feasible long-term solution to deal with real risk not exaggerated arguments .

Every day, EPA and its partners are moving ahead to choose and implement a final remedy for the site. And while we move to complete the necessary scientific work for a final remedy, we will keep the public's health protected.

EPA listens. The community told EPA to consider removing the contaminants from West Lake altogether.

EPA responds. The 2008 Record of Decision was scrutinized by the National Remedy Review Board, a headquarters-level panel of scientists and engineers, who recommended gathering more and newer scientific data.

Since 2010, EPA has directed and overseen the gathering of data on groundwater, air quality and radiation emissions to develop the most accurate picture of actual site conditions. When this reevaluation is complete, EPA will weigh the options and recommend a remedy to the public for review and comment.

Along this methodical path toward a final remedy, EPA and its partners have focused on materials smoldering beneath the adjacent Bridgeton Sanitary Landfill, and how to keep them from impacting West Lake. The State of Missouri has taken the lead by requiring Republic Services to control odors coming from the Bridgeton Landfill and successfully stabilize the subsurface smoldering.

An engineering study, begun last October and now nearing completion under EPA oversight, will place a protective isolation barrier between Bridgeton and West Lake. Construction should begin soon, will take time, but will be done under EPA authority.

Some frustrated neighbors, as well as the editorial board of the Post-Dispatch, have called for the West Lake Site to be transferred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for handling under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program. FUSRAP, as it is called, has cleaned up several smaller radiologically-contaminated sites in the metro area, so why not West Lake?

The fact is that EPA cannot simply "hand off" West Lake to the Corps. That would require Congressional action. Even under FUSRAP, any Corps site cleanup would have to follow the same Superfund rules that EPA is following now.

From a standpoint of completing a final remedy, the challenges posed by the West Lake Landfill Site are very real, but they are not impossible to meet. They do, however, require the patience and understanding of a well-informed community, and they require an approach by EPA that strikes a balance of being scientifically thorough but expedient to the tasks at hand.

EPA is fully qualified to handle the job.